

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4881

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T AMMAN 4082

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, JO, US, TC

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER SUWAIDI'S REQUEST TO JORDANIANS

REFS: (A) AMMAN 3936; (B) ABU DHABI 1280; (C) AMMAN 4056;

(D) ABU DHABI 1303

1. SAW PRIME MINISTER RIFAI THIS MORNING. HE NOTED HE AND KING WOULD BE VISITING ABU DHABI ON JUNE 20-21. HE ASKED WHETHER EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED ANY REACTION ON BEHALF OF SUWAIDI REQUEST TO JORDANIANS FOR INVITATION TO VISIT US.

2. I SAID WE HAD NO REACTION YET FROM DEPARTMENT, ALTHOUGH IT SEEMED THAT ALL OF US WERE AGREED THAT SUWAIDI SHOULD PURSUE HIS INTEREST THROUGH OUR EMBASSY IN ABU DHABI. RIFAI REACTED SOMEWHAT NEGATIVELY, SAYING THE POINT WAS SUWAIDI HAD USED JORDAN AS INDIRECT CHANNEL FOR REQUEST TO VISIT AND THAT THIS WAS "ARAB" WAY OF SEEKING INVITATION WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT. HE HOPED THAT HE COULD TELL SUWAIDI WHEN HE SEES HIM THAT US WAS GENERALLY AGREEABLE TO VISIT AND THAT DETAILS AND ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE WORKED OUT WITH OUR EMBASSY IN ABU DHABI. I TOLD RIFAI FRANKLY THAT I HAD NO SUCH INSTRUCTIONS AND THAT HE COULD NOT SAY THIS. I HAD NO REASON PERSONALLY TO BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT WOULD REFUSE

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AND TURN DOWN SUWAIDI'S EXPRESSED INTEREST IN A VISIT

BUT I WOULD HAVE TO HAVE SOME OFFICIAL ANSWER BEFORE HE COULD SAY ANYTHING LIKE WHAT HE PROPOSED.

3. RIFAI SAID THAT SUWAIDI WOULD NOT ASK US FOR AN INVITATION DIRECTLY, BUT HE HOPED THAT OUR AMBASSADOR IN ABU DHABI COULD TALK TO SUWAIDI, REFER TO THE MESSAGE PASSED THROUGH THE JORDANIANS AND THEN WORK OUT THE ARRANGEMENTS. IN THE MEANTIME, I TOLD RIFAI ALL THAT HE COULD SAY WAS THAT THE MESSAGE HAD BEEN PASSED TO THE US AND WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION. RIFAI URGED THAT HE HAVE SOMETHING MORE POSITIVE TO RESPOND TO SUWAIDI THAN THAT, COULDN'T HE SAY THAT THERE WAS AGREEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE US IN PRINCIPLE TO ACCEPT THE VISIT WITH THE DETAILS, ETC., TO BE WORKED OUT. HE SAID HE KNOWS SUWAIDI WILL BE IN EUROPE WITH SHEIKH ZAYED ALL NEXT MONTH AND THAT THERE WAS NO DEFINITE TIME FRAME IMPLIED.

4. COMMENT: WHATEVER THE REASONS MIGHT BE, AND IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT JORDANIANS WISH TO POLISH THEIR IMAGE WITH UAE BY ACTING AS INTERLOCUTOR WITH US AS SUGGESTED BY ABU DHABI, IT SEEMS FROM HERE THAT WE SHOULD DECIDE ON WHAT TO DO ON THE BASIS THAT THIS IS A GENUINE REQUEST FROM UAE. I RECOMMEND THAT WE NOT LET THE PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING IT OVERCOME THE SUBSTANCE. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, UNLESS THERE ARE PROBLEMS THAT WE ARE UNAWARE OF FROM HERE, WE STILL CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE CARRIED AND PASSED THROUGH EMBASSY ABU DHABI AND THAT IF SUWAIDI IS SINCERELY INTERESTED THE DETAILS BE WORKED OUT THERE. MEANWHILE, RIFAI IS HOPEFUL THAT HE CAN INDICATE A LITTLE MORE POSITIVE RESPONSE ON OUR PART TO SUWAIDI. I WOULD URGE THAT WE DO SO, ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT WELL BE BEST FOR AMBASSADOR STERNER TO DISCUSS THIS REQUEST WITH SUWAIDI, PERHAPS EVEN BEFORE ARRIVAL OF THE KING AND RIFAI. RIFAI HAS ASKED THAT I GET SOMETHING DEFINITE FOR HIM BEFORE THURSDAY AFTERNOON LOCAL TIME JUNE 19. MEANWHILE HE HAS BEEN TOLD (ABOVE) THAT
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HIS RESPONSE ON OUR BEHALF MUST BE LIMITED TO MERELY STATING THAT THE MESSAGE HAS BEEN PASSED ON. WE CAN OF COURSE TELL HIM FROM HERE THAT WE ARE POSITIVE ON VISIT OR IF DEPARTMENT WOULD PREFER, WE WOULD BE JUST AS PLEASED TO HAVE WHATEVER RESPONSE WE MIGHT MAKE TO THIS REQUEST TO SUWAIDI ALSO PASSED ON TO RIFAI DURING THE VISIT BY AMBASSADOR STERNER IN ABU DHABI. THIS HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF REINFORCING THE WELL-TAKEN

POINT THAT THE LOCUS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP REMAINS
ABU DHABI EVEN THOUGH SUWAIDI HAS APPARENTLY
CHOSEN THIS ROUND-ABOUT ROUTE FOR AN INITIAL
INQUIRY. PLEASE ADVISE.
PICKERING

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NNN

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